

# Day of the

**When there's no more room in hell, the dead will walk the Earth. And their favourite meal will be baked beings on toast! This month's Video World classic is the final installment in George Romero's epic zombie trilogy, and one of the most gruesome horror movies ever produced. Go on, make your *Day* and read all about it...**

**H**orror director George Romero conceived *Day Of The Dead* as the last chapter in his "Living Dead" trilogy (after *Night Of The Living Dead* and *Dawn Of The Dead*). Unfortunately, budget restrictions forced Romero to rethink the scale of his final entry in the series and what was once seen as an epic tale of zombie against man became a low-budget, claustrophobic character study set almost entirely in an underground storage facility.

The film opens as a



female scientist (Lori Cardille), a helicopter pilot (Terry Alexander), a communications expert (Jarlath Conroy) and a soldier (Antone DiLeo) land in a deserted Florida city in search of humans who may be trapped there. The bright sunshine shows only desolation. An alligator wanders out of a bank building. The wind carries money through the streets. The noise of the helicopter and Cardille's shouting for signs of life with a bull-horn rouse the attention of a small army of zombies - the living dead - who shuffle toward the source of the sound.

Realising that their small party constitute the only living humans in the city, Cardille and her group fly back to their headquarters, which is a huge underground storage facility that has been converted into a laboratory and military barracks. The government has assigned the military the task of protecting and assisting a group of scientists who are working to develop a solution to the epidemic that has brought the dead back to life. Test zombies are herded into a holding pen by the military and the scientists use the zombies as specimens in their experiments. The operation has taken its toll on the soldiers, however, and few remain in the command of the near-psychotic Joseph Pilato, who intends to take over the project and end it.





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There is tension among the scientists as well. Cardille looks to find a cure for the disease, while the mad Dr. Logan (Richard Liberty) - whom the soldiers have nicknamed "Frankenstein" - tries to modify the zombies' behaviour so that humans can train them like dogs. The two civilians (Alexander and Conroy), live in a trailer home separated from the others. Alexander thinks the whole project is ridiculous and looks forward to the day he can take his helicopter to a desert island and start a new civilisation that will be isolated from the zombie population.

Pilato eventually takes control of the scientists and places a state of martial law against them. Any of them found disobeying his orders will be shot. The dim-witted military man does not understand the nature of their experiments, and demands noticeable results in their research or he will close down the entire operation. Cardille is outraged and tries to take a stand, but the threat of execution quiets her. Liberty - who seems totally mad himself - laughs it off and asks Pilato: "Where will you go?"

The zombies now outnumber humans 400,000 to one. While Cardille's research seems to have stagnated, Liberty has been making progress with the zombies and one of their number (nicknamed 'Bub') actually demonstrates a certain level of human understanding. Liberty surmises Bub must have been in the military when he was alive, because the zombie demonstrates a working knowledge of guns, and when he sees the uniformed Pilato he actually salutes - an action which chills Pilato to the core. Cardille is curious how Liberty has managed to train Bub, and gets the answer when she discovers the scientist feeding the zombie human remains. Pilato discovers this as well and in a rage he kills Liberty and another scientist. He then sends Cardille and Conroy into the cave that serves as the zombie holding pen in the hope that they will be torn apart by the creatures. Meanwhile one of







the soldiers has cracked under the strain and has opened up the huge freight elevator to the underground complex, letting in a flood of flesh-hungry zombies...

As usual, George Romero did a sensational job with this movie, even though it can rightly be considered less interesting than its immediate predecessors. The need to exploit the horror

of the basic situation has passed and the film concentrates on its implications and possible solution. The standard 1950s science-fiction-horror film conflict between science and the military is resurrected here to good effect. One aspect becomes clear in *Day Of The Dead* - that zombies are here

to stay and man must adapt in order to survive as a species. Romero's original conception of the final chapter saw scientists able to train a small army of intelligent zombies which were then turned over to the military to be used in a power struggle for supremacy over the dead and the remaining living. The



epic scale of Romero's vision would have required a budget far greater than the other films of the series, and when he could not promise distributors an 'R' rating (due to the extreme violence it remained unclassified in the States), the financing vanished and he was forced to scale down the script.

Once again Romero's cast of unknowns is outstanding, with Cardille (daughter of Pittsburgh television host "Chilly Billy" Cardille - a man instrumental in the making of *Night Of The Living Dead*) taking top honours as a strong, determined, intelligent and independent woman scientist whose bravery



exceeds that of any of the male members of the cast. As is the case in the other two films, the main voice of reason is provided by a black man, Terry Alexander, who sees that the only hope for mankind is to give up their monuments and start anew. Those familiar with Romero's previous movies will also



went unrealised, there is a possibility that there may be a fourth living dead movie, maybe called *Twilight Of The Dead*. But

even if gory George calls it a day at *Day*, his nightmare trilogy will still have been a remarkable achievement. Give this one another look today - and *choke on it!*



be able to spot John (Martin) Amplas, and of course Richard Liberty was in *The Crazies*.

Perhaps the most affecting performance is that of Howard Sherman, playing the intelligent zombie, 'Bub.' Sherman brings a pathos to the monster that is reminiscent of Karloff's great performance in the original *Frankenstein*. The gruesome special effects by Tom Savini are some of the best work he has ever done, and they have all that much more impact for being mainly held off until the last twenty minutes or so. Since Romero's original vision of the end of the series

